

USACE

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# **Colonie (New York) Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program Site**

## **Community Relations Plan**

**October 2000**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This document outlines the community relations approach to be used for the Colonie Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) Site located in Colonie, New York. The purpose of the community relations effort is to 1) identify concerns the local community may have regarding current or planned remedial efforts at the site, 2) determine the best methods for communicating with interested stakeholders, and 3) set forth a strategy for on-going, two-way communication between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the community. In this document, the term “stakeholders” refers to community residents, interested or involved agencies, local businesses, and environmental organizations.

This Community Relations Plan specifically provides stakeholders and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with an overview of the current issues and concerns identified during the development of this plan. Additionally, this document outlines the public involvement opportunities that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will provide to interested stakeholders as the cleanup process continues.

A brief history of the Colonie FUSRAP Site is provided later in this section.

### **1.1 Contacts**

For more information regarding this document or the Colonie FUSRAP Site, contact the following individuals:

Joseph Forcina, PE  
Project Manager  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
26 Federal Plaza  
New York, NY 10278  
(212) 264-0554  
[Joseph.Forcina@nan02.usace.army.mil](mailto:Joseph.Forcina@nan02.usace.army.mil)

Bradley Eaton  
Site Project Engineer  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
1130 Central Avenue  
Albany, NY 12205  
(518) 453-0803  
[Bradley.Eaton@usace.army.mil](mailto:Bradley.Eaton@usace.army.mil)

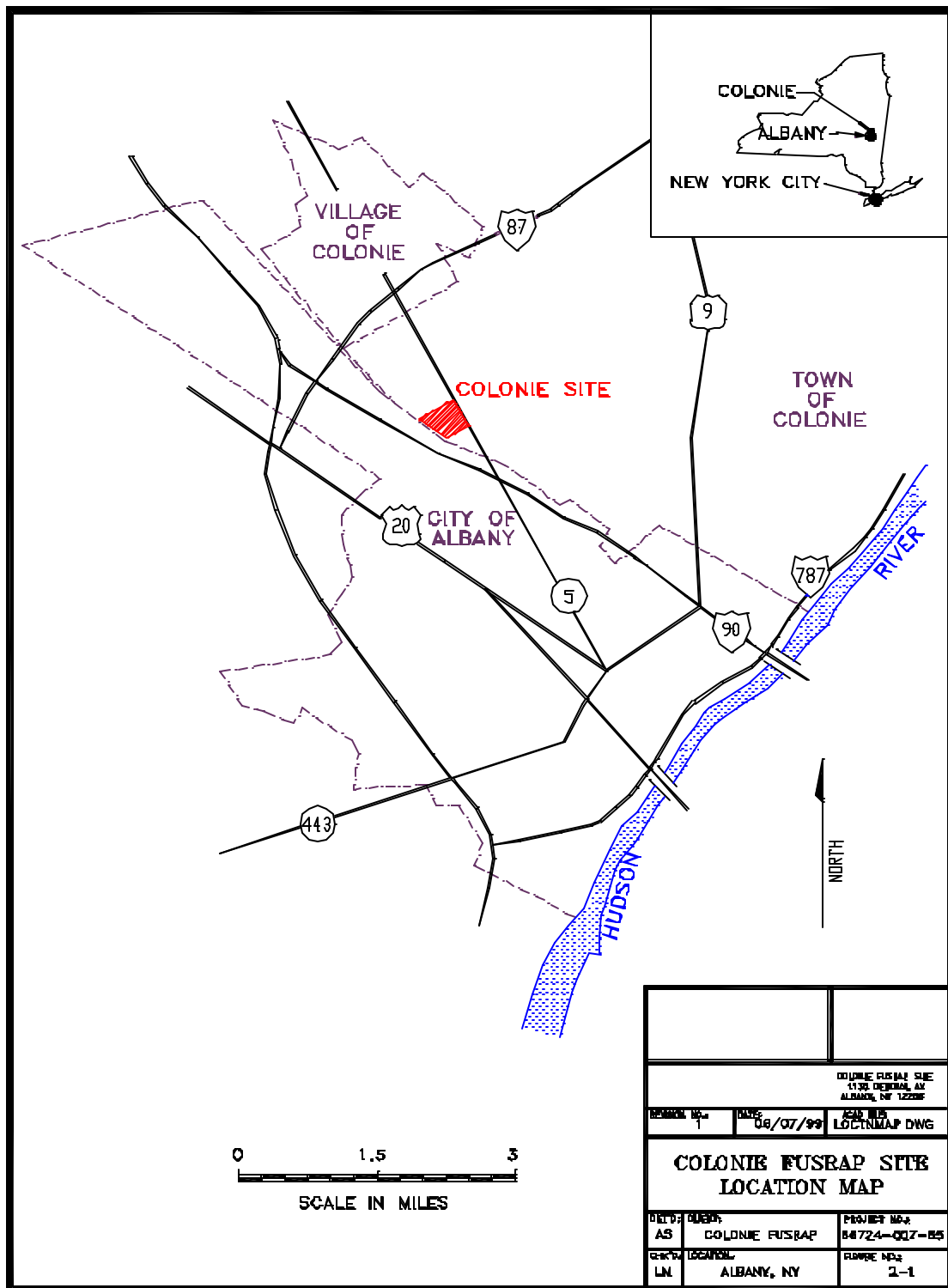
### **1.2 Project Background**

The 11.2-acre Colonie FUSRAP Site was owned and operated by National Lead Industries from 1937 to 1984 (see Figure 1). National Lead used the facility for electroplating and manufacturing components using uranium and lead. As a result of manufacturing operations, radioactive materials were released into the air by way of plant exhaust stacks and spread to site buildings, portions of the grounds, and 56 residential and commercial vicinity properties in the Town of Colonie. National Lead also disposed of contaminated casting sand into the former Patroon Lake.

The U.S. Federal Government assumed possession of this site with the clear purpose of remediating it to appropriate environmental standards. From 1984 to 1997, the Colonie Site was under control of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). DOE performed an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) to determine the best cleanup approach for site contaminants. Public input was obtained via a public comment period for

consideration in the remedy selection process. During this time, DOE remediated a total of 53 vicinity properties and demolished all remaining National Lead buildings.

**Figure 1**



In 1997, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) assumed control of the site and responsibility for carrying out the remaining remediation activities as identified in the EE/CA prepared by DOE in 1995. In addition to the remaining EE/CA removal actions, future site activities include re-evaluation of alternatives detailed in the DOE EE/CA of 1995, conducting a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study to evaluate the extent of possible groundwater contamination, and preparing a final Record of Decision which will allow for completion of all remedial activities at the site.

The release of any future decision documents (i.e., an EE/CA) for public review and comment will mark the beginning of a 30-day public comment period. During this comment period, the public can review the document and submit their comments for consideration on the proposed action. During the 30-day period, a public meeting, sponsored by the Corps, will be held to discuss the document and the proposed alternatives. Once the comment period ends, the Corps will consider all comments received before selecting the preferred remedy. In follow-up, a Responsiveness Summary will be issued with the agency's final decision and all comments received during the public comment period.

This background information provides only a brief site history of the Colonie Site and the public involvement process, since these topics are extensively covered in other technical documents. Technical documents related to the site can be found at the Information Repository located in the Reference Area of the William K. Sanford Town Library at 629 Albany Shaker Road in Loudonville, New York.

### **1.3 Community Relations Plan**

An earlier Community Relations Plan was drafted by the Department of Energy and was last updated in April 1995. In 1997, the Corps identified the Community Relations Plan as a document requiring an update to reflect current community concerns and to develop an appropriate outreach approach. Current information was obtained through community interviews conducted in Albany during November 1999. Results from these interviews are presented in section 2.0. Additionally, informal input was obtained from the Corps regarding the projected level of outreach and information dissemination for upcoming activities.

## 2.0 COMMUNITY INTERVIEW SUMMARY

The Corps and its contractors conducted interviews during the week of November 15-20, 1999, in Colonie and Albany, New York. A total of 31 community members were interviewed. The respondents included three local businesses, 12 were residents, three were elected officials, two represented newspapers, eight represented public agencies, and three represented environmental activist groups. Public agencies represented in the interviews included the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation – Bureau of Radiation & Hazardous Site Management, Albany County Department of Health, and William K. Sanford Town Library.

Interviewees were selected from the existing mailing list compiled from previous site activities. Specific efforts were made to interview representatives from each major stakeholder group involved with or known to be interested in the ongoing cleanup process at the Colonie Site. It should be noted that more people were interviewed than originally intended. For example, neighbors of a solicited respondent also participated in the interview process.

Respondents were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of seven questions with space for additional comments. Every person contacted agreed to participate in an interview. During the interviews, some respondents had specific site-related questions and/or statements that were noted. Responses to the questions (see Appendix B) may be prepared for the individual, or addressed through fact sheets, meetings, or press releases.

Key information obtained during the interviews can be summarized as follows:

- ?? The majority of respondents knew about the site, with several having been involved in the site's cleanup process since DOE assumed responsibility for remedial activities. This involvement has occurred primarily through attending public meetings. Those who have not participated in prior site activities are either new to the area, or have not received any complaints or questions about the site from their constituents.
- ?? Most respondents would like to receive site information through newsletter, public meetings, small group meetings, and site tours. Respondents also noted that community meetings and small group meetings are an important complement to information received through the mail.
- ?? The primary concern of respondents pertains to the cleanup approach selected in the EE/CA prepared by DOE. Local residents do not want any contamination to remain onsite. They have questions about the Designated Area. Respondents believe that all variables were not considered and public input was inadequate during the decision-making process.
- ?? Respondents indicated the need for greater interaction between site personnel and the local community to ensure better information dissemination. The majority of respondents want to be kept informed about site activities, cleanup progress, and upcoming meetings. Several respondents are interested

specifically in becoming involved in the decision-making process to determine future land use.

## **2.1 Interview Summary Details.**

Appendix C provides further detail with all questions and tabulated responses, as well as notes that express the way in which comments were made. This section provides the questions asked to the respondents and a summary of their responses.

### **Question 1: Have you heard of the Colonie FUSRAP Site before our visit? If so, how/where did you hear of it?**

The majority of respondents had heard of the site prior to our visit, with only one respondent not having any prior knowledge of the site. This respondent was new to the area. The majority of respondents had heard of the site through DOE outreach and cleanup activities.

### **Question 2: How do you like to receive information about projects/this project?**

The majority of respondents prefer to be informed through newsletters and community meetings on a quarterly basis or as site conditions change. Some suggested that public site tours be conducted or public meetings be held annually onsite. Others recommended more work with local media. Two respondents prefer to use a website and e-mail updates.

### **Question 3: Have you participated in activities at or concerning the site?**

Ten respondents had participated in public meetings or other public involvement activities associated with the site, such as attending meetings or receiving information. Eight respondents had not participated in any site-related activities.

### **Question 4: What are your current concerns /issues about the site?**

The primary concerns of respondents pertain to long-term health effects from site contamination and the end state of the site. The next highest concern is water contamination due to the site. This concern focuses on both water being discharged into the creek adjacent to the site and groundwater.

Another high-ranking concern is DOE's remedy selected in the 1995 EE/CA that is being implemented by the Corps. Respondents are very concerned with the prospect of having contaminated materials remain onsite in a Designated Area, and the plans associated with this disposal approach. In particular, respondents felt that all variables were not considered and that adequate public input was not obtained during the decision-making process.

Other concerns expressed included access to and the type of information going out to the public, the duration of the overall remedial activity, and property values.

### **Question 5: How can interactions between local communities and site personnel be improved?**

Respondents made clear their need to have interactions with the Corps to ensure a healthy exchange of project information and community concerns. One respondent directly mentioned the need for honest and open communication between the site and the community. Specific suggestion on how to improve these interactions included the

use of more public meetings, newsletters, door-to-door canvassing, and the importance of sharing analytical data from samples taken outside the project site.

**Question 6: How would you like to be involved in future activities?**

The majority of respondents are interested in being kept informed about site meetings, activities, and progress through newsletters. Several respondents expressed an interest in becoming involved in the decision-making process for future land use determination. Several suggestions were also provided for reaching out to the surrounding community and disseminating information such as regular public meetings and newsletters, and going door-to-door to talk with residents and to distribute site information.

**Question 7: Do you have any suggestions on other people in the community we should talk with or add to our mailing list?**

These names were noted and incorporated into the mailing list. To date, the mailing list is comprised of approximately 160 names. However, it is being updated to reflect new additions, address corrections and undeliverable addresses.



### 3.0 COMMUNITY RELATIONS STRATEGY

The overall goal of the community relations strategy is to establish effective and comprehensive communication and information exchange with all stakeholders. This information exchange should also keep interested parties informed of site activities and make them aware of opportunities for involvement in future site-related activities. Additionally, information exchange should be sufficient and accessible enough to allow stakeholders to provide input into the remainder of the remedial decision-making process.

Key components of the community relations strategy to achieve better information exchange include a project summary; regular informal contacts with elected officials and public agencies; and information sources for the public including regular fact sheets and public meetings, press releases to local news media, an Internet site, and small group meetings.

#### 3.1 Project Summary and Updates

**Project Summary:** A summary was drafted that briefly describes the history of the site, the acquisition of the site by DOE, the transfer of the site to the Corps, and remedial activities performed to date. This summary will be distributed to the Key Contact List (see Appendix A). The summary is intended to provide enough information so these individuals will feel comfortable in responding to questions from the public and will know how to contact appropriate site personnel with any additional questions. The summary will be updated semi-annually or as necessary to keep Key Contacts informed of current remedial activities such as the amount of soil characterized and stabilized, the schedule, upcoming milestones, and any other significant site information.

**Informal Updates:** Periodically, project personnel will make contact with persons on the Key Contact List to provide information updates on any significant project information.

#### 3.2 Fact Sheets and Public Meetings

These two mechanisms are designed to be the primary methods of information dissemination between the site and the local community.

**Fact Sheets:** Fact sheets will be prepared and distributed semi-annually or as circumstances warrant. Information provided in these publications will be informative and comprehensive in nature so recipients will have a clear understanding of site progress, the site schedule and upcoming milestones, and future site-related activities such as public meetings and discussions on future land use. Contact information via the Internet, telephone, and mail will always be provided so people may submit any questions, comments, concerns or requests for presentations to a community group. Thus far, two fact sheets were produced in December 1999 and Summer 2000. These fact sheets are available at the information repository located at the William K. Sanford Town Library.

**Public Meetings:** These events may either be structured in an informal open house or formal public meeting format with informational presentations given by site personnel. Meetings will be held annually or as circumstances warrant. Informational tools that will

be used at these meetings may include posters, fact sheets, and other site-specific displays or demonstrations, as appropriate. The purpose of any meeting is to convey information about the site in a clear and comprehensive manner and provide opportunities for members of the public to interact with site personnel.

### **3.3 News Releases**

Recognizing that members of the community rely on local news media for timely news about local activities, the provision of news releases is designed to develop and ensure a dependable source of information for members of the press and the readers. New releases will be issued to announce significant events or cleanup milestones reached at the site and will include such attachments as the most current fact sheet. As is the Corps' practice in handling media inquiries, questions from news representatives will be answered as soon as possible and every effort will be made to provide information completely, openly, and before deadlines.

### **3.4 Small Group Meetings**

This outreach mechanism refers to a smaller, more intimate meeting format that was requested through the community interviews. This mechanism allows for a site representative to give a presentation on site activities to a small group such as a neighborhood gathering or civic organization upon request or invitation. This type of meeting format provides small groups with the opportunity to ask questions and obtain information that may not otherwise be covered in a larger meeting or fact sheet.

### **3.5 Internet Website**

A public website was established as a means to provide site information ranging from site history, site photo and map, upcoming activities, and site-related documents. This website will be regularly updated with current site information and public participation opportunities. There is also a comment for where visitors to the website can submit questions or information requests electronically to the Corps. The address for the website is: <http://web.ead.anl.gov/corps/colonie>.

## **Appendix A: Key Contact List**

**Colonie Site Key Contact List**

**Congressional Representative**

Michael R. McNulty  
Federal Building, Room 827  
Albany, NY 12207  
Ph: 202-225-5076  
Fax: 202-225-5077

**Colonie Senate Representative**

Neil D. Breslin  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 808  
Albany, NY 12247  
Ph: 518-455-2225  
Fax: 518-465-1843

**Colonie District Assembly Representative**

Robert G. Prentiss  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 523  
Albany, NY 12248  
Ph: 518-455-5931  
Fax: 518-455-5840

**Albany County Legislators**

Harold Joyce  
183 Winthrop Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206  
Ph: 518-447-7168

Marlene Prentiss  
19 McNutt Drive  
Colonie, NY 12205

Wanda Willingham  
95 Henry Johnson Boulevard  
Albany, NY 12210

**Mayor of Albany**

Gerald D. Jennings  
City Hall  
Albany, NY 12205  
Ph: 518-434-5100  
Fax: 518-434-5013

**City of Albany Alderman**

Philip T. DiPace  
123 Yardboro Avenue  
Albany, NY 12205  
Ph: 518-459-3815

**Town of Colonie Supervisor**

Mary E. Brizzell  
562 Loudon Road, Box 33  
Newtonville, NY 12128  
Ph: 518-783-2728  
Fax: 518-786-6525

**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**

John E. Abunaw  
Bureau of Radiation & Hazardous Site Management  
Division of Solid & Hazardous Materials  
50 Wolf Road  
Albany, NY 12233-7255  
Ph: 518-457-2225  
Fax: 518-485-8390

Paul. J. Merges, Ph.D., Director  
Bureau of Radiation & Hazardous Site Management  
Division of Solid & Hazardous Materials  
50 Wolf Road  
Albany, NY 12233-7255  
Ph: 518-457-9253  
Fax: 518-457-9240

Jim Meacham  
Bureau of Radiation & Hazardous Site Management  
Division of Solid & Hazardous Materials  
50 Wolf Road  
Albany, NY 12233-7255  
Ph: 518-457-7265  
Fax: 518-457-9240

Steven G. Schassler  
Regional Director, Region 4  
1150 North Westcott Rd.  
Schenectady, NY 12306-2014

Clifton VanGuilder  
Solid & Hazardous Materials Engineer  
Region 4  
Albany, NY 12202

**Albany County Health Department**

Stephen S. Lukowski  
Director, Environmental Health Services  
South Ferry & Green Streets  
Albany, NY 12202  
Ph: 518-447-4620  
Fax: 518-447-4573

**Union Representatives**

Daniel J. McGraw  
Business Manager, International Union  
of Operating Engineers – Local 106  
1284 Central Avenue  
Albany, NY 12205  
Ph: 518-453-6518

Joseph A. Zappone  
Business Manager  
Laborers' Local Union 190  
668 Wemple Road, P.O. Box 339  
Glenmont, NY 12077  
Ph: 518-465-1254  
Fax: 518-465-1257

**News Media**

Dina Cappiello  
Albany Times-Union  
News Plaza, Box 15000  
Albany, NY 12212  
Ph: 518-454-5465  
Fax: 518-454-5628

Dev Tobin  
Colonie Spotlight  
P.O. Box 100  
Delmar, NY 12054  
Ph: 518-439-4949

Editor  
Times-Record  
501 Broadway  
Troy, NY 12181

News Director  
WTEN-TV  
341 Northern Boulevard  
Albany, NY 12204

News Director  
WRGB-TV  
1400 Balltown Road  
Schenectady, NY 12309

News Director  
Radio 810-WGY  
1 Washington Square  
Albany, NY 12205

**Library/Information Repository**

William K. Sanford Town Library  
Richard Naylor  
629 Albany Shaker Road  
Loudonville, NY 12211  
Ph: 518-458-9274  
Fax: 518-438-0988

**Environmental Organizations**

Anne Rabe  
Citizens' Environmental Coalition  
33 Central Avenue  
Albany, NY 12210  
Ph: 518-462-5527

Peter Sheehan  
W. Haywood Burns Environmental  
Education Center  
200 Henry Johnston Boulevard  
Albany, NY 12210  
Ph: 518-463-9760

Aaron Mair  
Arbor Hill Environmental Justice Corp.  
200 Henry Johnson Boulevard  
Albany, NY 12210  
Ph: 518-463-9760

Robert Foster  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
170 Washington Avenue, #3  
Albany, NY 12210  
Ph: 518-434-8171  
Fax: 518-434-8172

## **Appendix B: Respondent Questions**

The Corps and its contractors conducted interviews during the week of November 15-20, 1999, in Colonie and Albany, New York. A total of 31 community members were interviewed. During the interviews, some respondents had specific site-related questions and/or statements that were noted and are provided below. Responses to the questions were provided individually, or addressed through subsequent fact sheets.

### **Site-related**

What is the purpose of the green tarp on the site fence? It does not seem to be on any other fences around the site.

Put a site map on the fence with a brief explanation of "what is what" on the site. Make this map available at meetings.

Are drums of depleted uranium (illegally) disposed of under the loading dock area of the former building?

What resulted from the EE/CA 1? 200 drums of depleted uranium on the site – are they still there? They were located at the former Ford's Beach.

### **Health-related**

Have any epidemiological studies been done in the areas surrounding the site? What about the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry or the Health Department?

Residents of Lowell St. would like to have their land re-tested and get the results this time. (Residents were not given earlier test results.)

Would like areas surrounding the site re-tested.

Land next to the church on Yardboro Avenue is contaminated because the previous owner refused access to the Department of Energy (DOE); land to the right of the church as you look at it.

What are the health effects of exposure to uranium?

### **Site Information Administration**

The Administrative Record needs to be updated, by has the Corps prepared any final reports since they took over the site? These will need to be added to the Administrative Record.

What is the Army's plan with regard to DOE's decision documents? Are they fully implementing DOE's plan? Are they looking only for public involvement regarding final land use or are there changes to the remedial plan? If there are changes to these plans, how are they planning on getting public involvement?

Agency representatives would like a meeting between the County Health Department and the Corps.



## **Appendix C: Interview Questions and Responses**

This Appendix presents the summarized interview information for the Colonie FUSRAP Site. See Section 2.0 for key points of information obtained during the interviews.

Interviews were conducted in the Town of Colonie and Albany, New York during the week of November 15, 1999. A total of 31 community members were interviewed. The respondents included three operated local businesses, twelve were residents, three were elected officials, two represented newspapers, eight represented public agencies, and three represented environmental activist groups. Public agencies represented in the interviews included the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation - Bureau of Radiation & Hazardous Site Management, Albany County Department of Health, and William K. Sanford Town Library.

Interviewees were selected from the existing mailing list compiled from previous site activities. Specific efforts were made to interview representatives from each major stakeholder group involved with or known to be interested in the ongoing clean up process at the Colonie Site. It should be noted that more people were interviewed than originally intended. For example, neighbors of a solicited respondent also participated in the interview process. Since the interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews, not every question may have been answered and information was gathered about other related issues expressed by the respondent. Additionally, another result of the flexibility of this interview structure, the numbers associated with comments in this appendix will not always correlate with the total number of respondents interviewed. Bulleted notes from interview responses are included to provide a sense of how comments were expressed. Everyone contacted agreed to participate in an interview.

**Question 1: Have you heard of the Colonie FUSRAP Site before our visit?**

Yes: 17  
No: 1

**If so, how/where did you hear of it?**

DOE activities/outreach:	7
Contamination discovery:	4
Before agency involvement:	3
Recent interest within last 6 years:	2
Real estate disclosure:	1
Media:	1
Outside investigations/work:	1
Interview contact:	1

?? Can't remember where respondent heard of the site, but was interviewed by someone twice at the trailers on the site. Respondent used to receive a newsletter 2-3 times a year, but not anymore. Respondent doesn't know what is going on at the site currently because respondent hasn't heard anything for a while.

?? When it was still NL and producing. And then when the EE/CA came out; EE/CA study identified a 1/2-mile radius from the site; they were told they had nothing to worry about. That was when other respondent started an informal poll of health abnormalities in the area.

?? Since DOE assumed control. Most remedial action done in Colonie, hardly any done along Yardboro.

**Question 2: How do you like to receive information about projects/this project?**

Fact sheets/newsletters:	10
Community meetings:	5
Letter:	3
Site tour/meeting onsite:	3
Media:	3
Site summaries:	2
Web site:	2
Email:	2
Small group meetings:	2
Post signs on well-traveled roads:	1
Activity schedule:	1
Display on site fence:	1

**Frequency:**

Quarterly:	3
Semi-annually:	2
As site conditions change:	4

?? Respondent likes newsletters and community meeting. Respondent feels that newsletters should be sent out every 3-4 months, and meeting should be held about 4 times per year.

?? Doesn't care how, just needs to get it. Would like to receive a schedule of activities. Fact sheets, newsletters, letters, document copies. Should have an orientation meeting with involved agencies. Updates as site status changes or information becomes available.

?? Letters addressed to the homeowners; web site - community center web site; email; working with the media; posting signs along well-traveled roads; onsite tours/meetings.

**Question 3: Have you participated in activities at or concerning the site?**

Yes: 10

No: 8

**How:**

Interviews (Bechtel):	1
Meetings:	7
EE/CA comment period:	1
Open house:	1
Received information:	2
All aspects:	1
Site tour (USACE):	1

- ?? Just attended an Open House.
- ?? Meetings were never advertised enough; they usually heard after the fact.
- ?? No (health) studies done in this area; only spoke with man doing sampling.  
Attended meetings onsite; Phil DiPace used to circulate site information.
- ?? No, know they have offered site tours, but respondent has never gone there.

**Question 4: What are your current concerns/issues about the site?**

Long-term health effects:	8	
End state of the site:	8	
Water discharges; permit:	6	
Use of semi-permanent cap; onsite disposal of radioactive and hazardous waste/final remedy as currently defined:	5	
Duration of cleanup:	5	
Actual levels of exposure during cleanup activities; environmental monitoring:		4
Methods and quality of cleanup work:	4	
Lack of information; inconsistent information:	4	
Access to information, historical:	3	
Groundwater contamination:	1	
Facilitate better relationships between partners; public involvement:	2	
Property values:	1	
Institutional controls:	1	
Status of work progress:	1	
Don't know enough of site:	1	

- ?? Current concerns include: status of work progress; the end state of the site (would like to know if it's been decided); and respondent didn't know that there was any radiological contamination in the soil on the site until a few years back (concerned because father worked in boiler room of Magnus Metal).
- ?? Concern about actual levels of exposure during cleanup activities – particles' ability to travel great distances and the effect on health.
- ?? Lack of information – what's the plan, schedule? Environmental monitoring; concern with health impacts, now and in future.
- ?? Activities going on for a long time – time for it to be done.

**Question 5: How can interactions between local communities and site personnel be improved?**

Interact with community:	7
Disseminate information to community:	6
Need to have some interactions:	3
Site personnel needs to be honest and open about activities:	1
Have right people at meetings to answer questions:	1
Get the job done thoroughly and expediently:	1
Regular updates to community:	1
Awareness and sensitivity to community concerns:	1

- ?? Interactions can be improved by getting information out to the community about what's going on (people would feel better about the site if they were informed).
- ?? Having right people at meetings to answer questions; avoid further upsetting residents (already upset since they are being exposed to contamination).
- ?? Have some. Action leads to the best relationship – get the job done expediently, but thoroughly.
- ?? Suggests mailing to people in the local neighborhoods and perhaps door-to-door informational exchange. Newssheet sent to mailing list every 2-3 months; lots of graphics.

**Question 6: How would you like to be involved in future activities?**

Written updates; send flyers to get people involved:	14
Attend/notify people of public meetings; site tours:	7
Phone calls:	3
Doesn't want to be too involved:	3
Decision making for future land use:	2
E-mails:	2
Participate in agency/higher level interaction:	1
Cooperative agreement interactions:	1
Door-to-door canvassing:	1
Church:	1
Word of mouth:	1
More direct involvement in all activities:	1

- ?? A few respondents would not like to be involved – one respondent previously gave input and thought that was enough, another would attend public meetings but that's about it.
- ?? By written updates; not a friendly site to get into and lots of precautions when you are there.
- ?? Door-to-door canvassing; church; word of mouth; would like to know when meetings are and what's going on.
- ?? Involved in decision-making process for future land use.

**Question 7: Do you have any suggestions on other people in the community we should talk with or add to our mailing list?**

These responses were compiled and incorporated into project mailing lists.

**General Comments:**

- ?? When plant was shut down, operations moved to Concord, MA; contaminated area very similar to NL site, manufactured similar components; wherever these plants go, they'll end up contaminating the environment just by definition.
- ?? Respondent wants a health study conducted.
- ?? Respondents say that in every house in their neighborhood, there have been strange incidences of cancer and illnesses.

?? Respondent asked if the land goes back to NL after cleanup. Respondent has never really been concerned about the site.